

Growing up we didn't have smartphones or tablets to watch TV on - in fact for much of my childhood we just had one TV - at one point that one TV broke

My parents did not see fit to get it fixed for like a year or two

When they finally did, we were limited to one hour of TV a week - yeah, not a day, a week

Well, for my brother and me the decision was easy - we wanted to watch the coolest car on TV - The General Lee in the show the Dukes of Hazard

The longest 5 minutes of the week were the five minutes before show started - it was complete torture - the hands on the clock moved extra slow - it was like a time warp - those 5 minutes seemed like 5 hours

In some ways that is the type of anticipation we should have for the second coming of Christ

Jesus wants us to watch with great anticipation for one of the most important events in history - Jesus return in glory at the end of time

Some years ago, there was a movie called Left Behind - the movie was based a book by the same name - you might have heard about them from your Protestant friends

Based on Revelations 20:1-7, some Protestants believe that Jesus will reign on earth for a literal 1000 years

This belief is called premillennialism - it just means that Jesus will come before the 1000 year reign

There are two types of premillennialism - one that has Jesus coming back two more times, once for the second coming and one for the final judgment - the other has Jesus coming back three more times - one for the second coming for the Church, two for the second coming with the Church, and the third time for the final judgment

If this sounds confusing, it's because it is - If we were in a classroom instead of at Mass, I would draw a diagram for you But Jesus only ever talks about a second coming - He never mentions multiple returns to earth - So as Catholics, we believe in what is called amillennialism - that the 1000 year reign is symbolic and we are already in the end times - the end times began with the conception, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and will end with the second coming of Jesus at the end of time - at that time the final judgment will take place

Jesus' symbolic 1000 year reign is concretely lived out by the presence of the Church everywhere in the world, everywhere Christians respond to the Holy Spirit and make Christ present to themselves and those around them

Now this may seem odd to focus on the end times at the beginning of Advent

Advent is suppose to be a time to prepare for the First coming of Christ, Christmas, right?

The Church is smart - it realizes that Christmas historically happened in the past

The second coming however, historically, is yet to come

It is what we are preparing for - we are not preparing for Christ, the second person of the Trinity, to become a man - that has already happened - we are the beneficiaries of that great event

However, for us, in these end times, we need to prepare for the second coming

Just as the Jews prepared for almost a thousand years for the coming of the Messiah, we too need to prepare for the second coming

We need to take personal responsibility to respond to Christ and His love for us

This is what Jesus means when He says one will be taken and one will be left behind

Just because you have good Christian friends doesn't guarantee your entry into heaven - you can surround yourself with good godly Christian friends, but they cannot win a place for you in heaven

They can encourage you and be a positive influence in your life, but you personally will either accept or reject God's invitation to His kingdom

There is really no middle ground - We are either for God or against Him, for His kingdom of righteousness or against it

The choice is ours - God's grace is available to those who are willing to believe in God and obey His word

Now we all sin - that is what Confession is for - but what is our aim - what is our desire - is our desire for God and heaven or is it not? - Is our desire for holiness and righteousness or is it not?

We have to make the decision for Christ - we cannot pass on that responsibility to someone else - if we make a decision for Christ, God will give us the grace to grow in holiness and righteousness

Even though it is a personal responsibility, it is obviously true we can help to guard our faith and our personal yes to God by surrounding ourselves with good people, good influences, and the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Confession

Jesus ends today's Gospel with the parable of the thief - we might lock our doors at night to protect our material goods - this is just being a good steward of the material gifts God has given us

But if we do this, shouldn't we all the more do all we can to protect our spiritual goods? Jesus, in the Gospel of Matthew calls our faith in Him the Pearl of great price, the hidden treasure

The Lord Himself is our treasure, and He offers us Heaven, a place of immeasurable, true, and lasting love, peace, joy, and righteousness

The Lord offers us a personal relationship with Him as His sons and daughters and the promise of eternal life as well - this invaluable and eternal treasure is more secure and lasts longer than any earthly treasure could possibly last

But if we don't work on our relationship with Christ, Satan can come and rob us of our faith and hope in God

Satan is real and we need to guard our hearts from him

This is why we can never let down our guard or rest in our working on holiness and righteousness

It is in our desire and our constant working on holiness and righteousness that prepares us for the second coming

The more we prepare for the second coming the more we will understand the gift of the first coming

That is why I believe the Church has us begin this Advent season, this preparation for the remembering of the first coming, by looking and reflecting on the second coming

So as you begin this Advent season, your preparation for celebrating the first coming of Jesus, take time to reflect and take inventory on your preparation for Jesus second coming - are you ready? What more do you need to do to be ready?